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Thesis for the Degree of Master of Music

**MEANING IN MUSIC:**

**Towards criteria for a personal philosophy of music for the practising musician.**

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## ABSTRACT

The practicing musician is involved in the day-to-day business of presenting "music" in its many forms and expressions to an audience of some kind. This thesis explores the proposition that a philosophy of music is necessary to the musician, and that such a philosophy cannot be separated from a philosophy of life.

Through a discussion of the meaning of life and the meaning of music as an expression of art, this paper develops criteria for a philosophy of music for the practising musician. Such a philosophy must:

1. be grounded in a philosophy of the whole of life.
2. show how art is related to the origin and nature of man.
3. include a definition of art.
4. link music and life experience.

In seeking to move towards such a basis for a philosophy of music, the thesis draws on philosophical contributions related to both life and music, particularly in the collection The Meaning of Life edited by Klemke, and through aspects of the theories of art and its life-connectedness explored by John Dewey, Iredell Jenkins and Leland Ryken, in their books, Art and Experience, Art and the Human Enterprise, and Culture in Christian Perspective respectively.

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Meaning in Music: towards criteria for a personal philosophy of music for the practising musician.

Introduction

Victor Frankl once wrote: "Man's concern about a meaning of life is the truest expression of the state of being human."<sup>1</sup> This thesis is part of my personal quest as a practising musician for meaning in music as it relates to the whole of life. To me it seems impossible to separate life and music, and profitable to link them. Increasing depth and breadth of experience in life and music has led to profound questions regarding the relationship of music to life; for example, "Why is music such an important part of my life? What does it signify about the meaning of life? Why does some music stir me to the depths of my being, and other music leave me quite unaffected? What is music? What is the significance of music in the matter of being human, for me or anyone?" This concern for meaning, "...the truest expression of the state of being human"<sup>2</sup> spoken of by Frankl, consists of intense consciousness of potential destiny and of a sense of excitement at being on the edge of illumination and understanding. As the writer of Proverbs expressed it, "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter."<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this thesis is to fully identify the questions involved in my own search for meaning in music, to research the identified areas of concern, and to arrive at criteria which will be the basis for a philosophy of music for myself and other musicians with similar concerns. Reinforcement of the legitimacy of this aim

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<sup>1</sup>E.D.Klemke ed., The Meaning of Life, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. vii.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Proverbs, the book of. The Holy Bible. New King James Version. Nashville, Camden, New York. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1972, 1984.

came in the preface to Art and the Human Enterprise by Iredell Jenkins.

There are many people who find in painting or sculpture, poetry or music, architecture or the dance, not only a rich enjoyment, but also a heightened sense of the meanings that life and the world contain and of their own participation in these meanings. It is but natural that these people should want to understand the values they have spontaneously found, to hold them in some more secure form than that of immediate apprehension, to know something of the creative process by which they have been brought into being, and to have a rational grasp of the way in which art illuminates experience and contributes to the conduct of life. In a word, to enjoy art is to be curious about it.<sup>1</sup>

I identify with the description of experience in the arts (in my case music), causing a "...heightened sense of the meanings that life and the world contain..."<sup>2</sup> When I have been deeply moved by music, performed by myself or another, there has been an innate sense of significance in the experience, a sense that something important, or "meaningful" has occurred, although it is a very intangible "something", and difficult to describe. When discussing this phenomenon with the highly respected Tasmanian musician Jessie Wakefield, she described a performance, which stands out as one of the most significant musical experiences of her career. It occurred during the performance by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra of the tenth symphony of the Russian composer Shostakovich. Conductor Vanco Cavdarski and the orchestra of which Jessie was a member moved in such unity of intention with the music, that the performance experience became charged with an extraordinary, emotional dynamic in which all performers were vitally involved - an unforgettable, meaningful experience, but just what was its meaning? John Hospers says of this kind of experience:

To have experiences is one thing; to talk about them is another. It is possible have intense and valuable experiences in response to works of art without attempting to make claims for them or to characterise the works to which they are responses. As a rule, however, this is just what we try to do; and here endless confusion begins. We ask, "What is the meaning of this piece of music?" without stopping to ask ourselves what it is that we are asking, precisely what sense of

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<sup>1</sup>Jenkins, I. Art and the Human Enterprise. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press. 1958. p.viii.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

"meaning" is being used here, or what it means for a work of art to have meaning.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis will seek to bring together philosophical insights into the meaning of meaning, the meaning of life, and meaning in music, in order to enhance the understanding of these complex and mysterious issues for myself and the many practising musicians for whom they have relevance and importance, hence enriching our day-to-day practice of the art of music. To put it another way, the above exercise will begin to provide the basis for a life related philosophy of music by the answering of questions of meaning in life and music. This thesis is primarily a part of my quest to more fully understand the significance or meaning of music in my own life, and hopefully to contribute to that end for others.

My musical background is similar to that of many Western musicians. Interest and musical talent were recognised when I was very young, and opportunity for development of ability led to an increasing sense of fulfilment along with a committed pursuit of excellence. Tertiary study was embarked upon and I became both a concert performer and a teacher. Undergirding my growth as a musician was a working philosophy of life, tested out in issues great and small from childhood onwards, based on the acceptance of the reality of God, and the accessibility of love, life and wisdom through Jesus Christ, by the indwelling Spirit of God. This philosophy included an understanding that, as life is given by God, each individual is intrinsically valuable, as are his or her talents or abilities. This concept of the "givenness" of life included the responsibility to use abilities not only for personal fulfilment but for the good of others, based on Jesus Christ's teaching, "Give and it will be given to you..."<sup>2</sup> or as St. Francis of Assisi put it:

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<sup>1</sup>Hospers, J. Meaning and Truth in the Arts. Chapel Hill. University of North Carolina Press. 1946. p.v.

<sup>2</sup>Luke, the Gospel of. The Holy Bible. New King James Version. Nashville, Camden, New York. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1972, 1984. Luke 6:38.

"It is in giving that we receive..."<sup>1</sup>

This philosophy of life with its assumptions and implications has caused a need and a desire for a greater understanding of the nature and role of music in the life of society and the individual. How important is it to the individual and to the community of which he or she is a part, and for what reasons? I need a philosophy of music which will answer that question. The practical living out of my philosophy of life also raises the question of the importance of my own artistic development relative to that of others, and subsequent commitment and allotment of time and energy. Many artistically gifted people are not able to use their talents due to emotional and spiritual malfunction, but they can be helped through prayer, counselling and encouragement. Such a contribution to the life of another is one that I have made and can continue to make; it is very satisfying, and it is observably valuable. Although different, is the value of my artistic contribution of equal value? This is another question to be answered by a philosophy of music.

I found some reflection of my concerns in Jenkins' comment on "aesthetic confusions - on both the theoretical and the practical planes" which he believes result from "our inability to conceive of art as a vital and coherent element within the human context."

We certainly honour art, often very excessively. But we do not really respect it: that is, we do not see it as playing a responsible role in the direction of our lives, and we do not have a clear sense of any significant contribution that it makes to the pursuit of our well-being. Particularly, we do not feel art to have at all the same realistic and purposive character as our scientific and technological activities, whose bearing we can grasp so clearly and with which we feel so much at ease. This is the general misapprehension that must be corrected, if art is to assume its rightful place in our lives and culture, and if we are to derive from it the sustenance we badly need and it alone can offer.<sup>2</sup>

Jenkins' description here of the uncertainty among many as to art's significance has been expressed by myself, and many others I know, out of a

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<sup>1</sup>Francis, Saint. Traditional prayer.

<sup>2</sup>Jenkins I., op. cit., p.2.

suspected conflict between a love of music and a perceived responsibility to contribute effectively to the well-being of fellow human beings. Our need is for conviction that such effective serving will come about through our artistic endeavours. Jenkins is convinced of the unique contribution of art in all its forms to the human enterprise. His assertion is that "Men behave aesthetically - they create and appreciate art - because it is only by so doing that they can give expression to certain forces that lie deep within them..."<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this thesis is to verify the validity of his claim and to explore its significance for a philosophy of music for the practising musician.

It will be clearly seen why it is impossible for me to consider the topic of meaning in music without placing it in the wider context of meaning in life, complex though this area is philosophically. Undoubtedly there are those who find that life can be lived more or less effectively without the pieces always fitting together, or ever fitting together, using the analogy of life as a jigsaw puzzle. The philosopher Kai Nielson believes that without a metaphysical "...comprehensive conception of things, there can be joy in life, morally, aesthetically, and technically worthwhile activity and a sense of human purpose and community",<sup>2</sup> which he believes to be the ingredients for meaning in life. That is, his philosophy does not require that "...to be meaningful, life would have to be comprehensively meaningful and its meaning invulnerable to assault."<sup>3</sup> The writer Tolstoy, however, came to a point of needing such a "comprehensively meaningful"<sup>4</sup> explanation of life although he felt at first that the questions "why, well and then?"<sup>5</sup> passing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Klemke, E.D.(Ed.) The Meaning of Life. New York, Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1981. pp. 202&203.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.9.



through his mind were "...simply aimless, inappropriate..."<sup>1</sup> However, "the questions began to repeat themselves oftener and oftener, answers were demanded more and more persistently",<sup>2</sup> and the matter of answering became a matter of life and death, the imperative of his whole life. "The questions were not waiting, and I had to answer them at once; if I did not answer them, I could not live..."<sup>3</sup>

While this is an extreme example of the position in which any individual, artist or otherwise, might find himself when needing answers to life's questions, it serves as a vivid example of the need for an individual to have a strong foundation for living, i.e. a philosophy of life which makes sense of the burning personal issues as they present themselves. Tolstoy sought until he found that which became an answer for him; it would not be everyone's answer, as others such as R.W.Hepburn demonstrate by their criticism of Tolstoy's conclusions.<sup>4</sup> But it gave Tolstoy hope, and enabled him to continue living and writing. The practising musician needs a sense of "raison d'être" in order to live out fully that particular life work. This thesis will provide a contribution to that end.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 212, 213.

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

In analysing the thesis topic, the two phrases "meaning in music" and "the practising musician" represent the two poles of concern, linked by the criteria for a philosophy of music. Each term and concept, "meaning", "music", "criteria", "personal philosophy" is directed towards the one concern for the practising musician.

#### The practising musician.

The practising musician can be defined simply as any person who commits a major proportion of thought, energy, and time to the pursuit of the skills of music-making. This pursuit may involve instrumental teaching or instruction in the theoretical or historical aspects of the art of music; it might mean employment as a member of a symphony orchestra, or of a chamber music group. The musician may be a soloist, singer or instrumentalist, a conductor, a composer, a member of a band or a researcher in some aspect of the wide spectrum covered by the term "music." As the definition of music will be given below, suffice to say for the present purpose, that the particular area of music under consideration focuses on "serious" rather than "light" music, but without any thought that the one is any the less truly "music" than the other. The musician is visualised, for the purpose of the thesis, in a context of Western art music, as it has flowed out of Europe to every other part of the globe over the last five centuries. Thus in concept, the practising musician of the late Twentieth Century, be it Sculthorpe, Sitsky, Mills, Lancaster, Challender, Kay, or the thousands who are never known except by those who immediately benefit from their conviction and commitment, is linked with such famous musicians as Monteverdi, the Bach family, his forebears and his sons, Mozart, Beethoven, Robert and Clara Schumann, Liszt...and so the list could go on.

Within the general category of the practising musician described above is

a subgroup for whom the motivation to understand the meaning of music springs from a spiritual awakening, bringing with it the consciousness that life itself is given, and one's calling and purpose in the wholehearted love of God is to love one's neighbour as oneself. These people need the conviction that a life committed to the pursuit of excellence in art music is actually a fulfilment of the love imperative given by Jesus Christ, and that the sharing of music through performance, teaching, conducting, composing or any other way, is not merely a self-centred exercise but one which is of benefit to others while simultaneously bringing personal fulfilment.

Whether one considers practising musicians in general, or the specific subgroup described above, the need for the undergirding of a philosophy of music securely rooted in a well-founded philosophy of life is the burden of this thesis.

### Music

The subject of music and its definition is notoriously controversial. In seeking a preliminary definition or description in the Oxford Companion to Music, and in Groves' Dictionary of Music and Musicians, I discovered that neither attempted a simple definition. In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, music is briefly described as "the science or art of combining tones into a composition having structure and continuity; vocal or instrumental sounds having rhythm, melody or harmony; an agreeable sound."<sup>1</sup> Arthur Jacob's New Dictionary of Music quotes the Concise Oxford Dictionary: Music is the "art of combining sounds with a view to beauty of form and expression of emotion."<sup>2</sup> In the Twentieth Century, the accepted definitions of melody, harmony and rhythm have been stretched up to, and some would say beyond, their conceivable limit.

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<sup>1</sup>Woolf H.B.,(Ed.in Chief.)The Merriam-Webster Dictionary. New York. Simon and Schuster. 1974.

<sup>2</sup>Jacob, Arthur. New Dictionary of Music. Harmondsworth, Middlesex. Penguin. 1958.

The difficulty in defining music in the late Twentieth Century is the breadth of expression and material which now constitutes music. The term covers "early music" of the western civilisation, the tribal music of Africa, Australia and any other nation visited by composers hungry for fresh sounds, the twelve tone system of Schoenberg - and still there is more! This brief discussion shows that the term "music" is used in a broad sense for the purpose of this research.

### Meaning

The term "meaning", the vital first word of the thesis topic, springboards our thoughts into the realm of philosophy. In his introduction to the selections "The Meaning of Life", Klemke comments on the fact that many, if not most sensitive people reflect on, if they don't agonise over, the question of what life is all about. This is the sense in which "meaning" is used. It could also be expressed as "What is life for?" or, "Does life have any point?" Camus writes on meaning in "The Myth of Sisyphus": "...Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy."<sup>1</sup> He develops his argument by saying that one can recognise the urgency of a question by looking at the action it entails. Many people die because they judge that their life is not worth living, and they commit suicide. Others are killed for ideas which they believe make life worth living. Camus concludes: "...therefore the meaning

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<sup>1</sup>Klemke E.D., op. cit., p. 4

of life is the most urgent of questions."<sup>1</sup> Klemke comments that part of its urgency is that it relates to so many other questions facing humans in their daily lives. Many of the decisions we make with regard to careers, leisure time, moral dilemmas, and other matters, depend on how we answer the question of the meaning of life.

This is precisely the point of research in this thesis. What is life for, "... the most urgent of questions "<sup>2</sup>, is connected and extended to what is music for. On a personal level it becomes what is my musical involvement for, or, what is the meaning of music in my life, the comprehensive answer to which will give me a philosophy of music. From a philosophical perspective, this is common usage of the concept of meaning. Technically, "meaning" is a notoriously complex subject in philosophy, just as the term "philosophy" itself is variously defined by those working in this field, let alone its definition in common usage.

#### Philosophy

Philosophy is by one common definition "the study or science of the truths or principles underlying all knowledge and being, including natural, moral and metaphysical."<sup>3</sup> John Hospers states that the typical questions of philosophy are "What do you mean?" and "How do you know?"<sup>4</sup> In enlarging on these points he mentions other issues which arise in aesthetics, that branch of philosophy directly concerned with music and the other arts, for example, "Are the criteria of value, if there are any, the same in works of literature as in works of music? If not, how and why do they differ? What is the relation of art to nature? Has art

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Blair, D. The Pocket Macquarie Dictionary. Adelaide. The Jacaranda Press. 1982.p. 673.

<sup>4</sup>Hospers, J. Introductory Readings in Aesthetics. New York. The Free Press. Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1969. p. 2.

anything to do with truth or with morality?"<sup>1</sup>

As the discipline of philosophy is concerned with asking questions, a philosophy of life or of music, will be arrived at by asking and receiving answers to the most significant questions of being and doing, in a way that satisfies intellect and integrity, according to available data. It could be argued that every individual lives out a philosophy of life, as commonly understood, either consciously or unconsciously. An underlying theme of this thesis is the advocating of a conscious, thought out philosophy as the most satisfactory and secure way to personal fulfilment and contribution to others, and discovery of the nature and purpose of one's life journey.

In their chapter on the philosophical foundations of music education, Leonard and House speak of the vital importance to music educators of their definition of a philosophy: "... we refer to a system of basic beliefs which underlies and provides a basis for the operation of the musical enterprise in an educational setting."<sup>2</sup> They suggest questions which apply equally to any practising musician, for example: What is there about music that impels us to spend our lives and our finances on what sometimes results in no immediate reward or recognition? What is there in music, and in our response to it, that strengthens the music practitioner to persevere and continue? What is the nature of the aesthetic musical experience? Answers to these questions form the beginnings of a philosophy of music, and sustain the practising musician in inspiration and enthusiasm, attributes essential to communication of and participation in music. A philosophy of music gives personal direction, as to goals, objectives and priorities, and a basis for sharing with others the significance of that which one has personally discovered in the realm of music practice.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.2.

<sup>2</sup>Leonard, C., & House R.W., Foundations and Principles of Music Education. New York, McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1959. p.83.

Criteria

A Criterion is "a standard, rule or principle testing anything"<sup>1</sup>, or "a standard on which a judgement may be based."<sup>2</sup> The intention of this paper is to suggest principles which will provide a firm foundation for the formulation of a philosophy of music for the practising musician.

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<sup>1</sup>Blair, D., op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Woolf H.B., op.cit., p.177.

### CHOICE OF TEXTS

Monroe C. Beardsley in his history Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present, agrees with research which credits the Greek civilisation with the first contribution to a philosophy of art, or aesthetics, through the writings of Plato and Aristotle amongst others. His history brilliantly summarises the perceptions of philosophers on artistic concerns, from that time to the present day, providing an excellent background and reference sources for the beginner in this field. Introductory Readings in Aesthetics, edited by John Hospers, concentrates its focus on the areas of conviction and disagreement among Twentieth Century thinkers (e.g. Prall, Clive Bell and Suzanne Langer) in various aspects of the philosophy of art. This volume was assembled with the student in mind and helps initiate those who are relative newcomers to the complexities of aesthetics. The eight areas covered commence with "The Aesthetic Attitude" and the contrasting view starkly stated, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude", and so the aesthetic tussles begin. The issues of form, expression, truth, symbolism and communication are all part of the search for understanding of the arts, and therefore of music the primary focus of this thesis.

In the endeavour to narrow the area of discussion to manageable proportions, writings linking meaning and music were investigated as to their suitability for the specific area of concern. In the preface to Music and Meaning, Coker describes his work as "...a fairly comprehensive theory of musical meaning designed to lead musicians and laymen alike to a richer appreciation of musical experience."<sup>1</sup> His method in pursuing this aim is the development of "...a semiotic-

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<sup>1</sup>Coker, W. Music and Meaning. New York. The Free Press, Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1972. P. xi.



gestural theory of music and musical experience".<sup>1</sup> Although of value in itself this proved to be a tangent to the purpose of this thesis.

In Emotion and Meaning in Music Leonard B. Meyer investigates the meaning of music from the perspective that

...before the relationship of music to other kinds of meaning and other modes of communication can be considered, a detailed examination of the meanings of music and the processes by which they are communicated must be made.<sup>2</sup>

The depth and the significance of his ensuing research emphasises the affective response of human beings to music, claiming for it a complementarity to intellectual response, rather than an alternative.<sup>3</sup> He explores the effects of musical learning on the affective response to any music, and then the unconscious elements in the emotional effects of music. Meyer's contribution to musical understanding is valuable in its specificity to its particular area of concern namely "...those meanings which lie within the closed context of the musical work itself..."<sup>4</sup> Meyer's contribution is peripheral rather than central to the current research.

In Imgard's The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity his translator Czerniawski explains something of what the work is and is not:

... he keeps clear of biography, creativity, listeners' psychological reactions, music's expressiveness and "meaning", and the social role of music in shaping the minds of worshippers, soldiers, workers or teenagers... he therefore concentrates on elucidating what works of art are and rightly ignores the question of how they come about and what they do or are supposed to do to us or for us. Consequently his chief interest lies in the musical work's structure, identity and ontic status.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Meyer, Leonard B. Emotion and Meaning in Music. Chicago, London. The University of Chicago Press, 1956. P. viii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Imgard, R. The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity. Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1986. P.viii.

The content of this accounting for the work of music relates very specifically to the role of the score itself and was therefore quite irrelevant to the "work of music" of concern to the current research. In Philosophy in a New Key Susanne Langer explores the implications for music of the theories of symbol and meaning which have revolutionised the areas of science and mathematics, and greatly influenced philosophical thought in this latter half of the Twentieth Century. Her theory of music as symbol claims "...that music articulates forms which language cannot set forth." Music tells us about feelings. "The content has been symbolised for us, and what it invites is not emotional response, but insight."<sup>1</sup> John Hospers includes analysis of Mrs. Langer's propositions, among those of many others in Meaning and Truth in the Arts. In this volume he aims to clarify whether general terms like "meaning", "reality," and "truth," have "any definite meaning at all when applied to the arts, and if so, is it the same meaning these terms have in logic or metaphysics."<sup>2</sup> In pursuit of his aim, Hospers reveals his capacity to analyse what people are really saying or not saying in the best tradition of the linguistic philosopher, at the same time drawing his own conclusions as to what can truly be claimed for the arts. For example, on music he says:

...it is through music we come to have some of our most treasured and valuable experiences; and they would not be one whit less valuable if some of the things that have been said about them should turn out not to be true. For music...does evoke profound and "life-related affective responses, responses which nothing else can evoke, which deepen and enrich our whole affective life, and which those who have had them would not exchange for gold."<sup>3</sup>

In declaring his approach to music in The Sociology of Music, Silbermann's

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<sup>1</sup>Langer, Susanne K. Philosophy in a New Key. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1942. p.232-33.

<sup>2</sup>Hospers, op. cit., p.vi.

<sup>3</sup>Hospers, J. Meaning and Truth in the Arts Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina Press. 1946. Pp.236, 237,

specific concern as a sociologist leads him to

... a very human question - namely, how do different groups and societies satisfy the musical needs of their members?<sup>1</sup>

This focus discusses the activities of the many groups involved in the widely diverse areas of music, and analyses the groups and their functions, seeking to contribute thereby to "the progress of culture ...the group's most important function consists in creating the conditions favourable to the working of the creative spirit."<sup>2</sup> The sociological approach to music is a very valuable tool for the practising musician, since it pays attention to the many aspects of group life, the context of shared musical experience, with which all musicians are vitally concerned.

Music and Poetry by Sidney Lanier contains lyrical outpourings as to the meaning and value of music. His claims for music are, firstly, that it is "...the characteristic art form of the modern time, as sculpture is of the antique and painting is of the medieval time;<sup>3</sup> secondly, that music complements science in its serving of humanity: "the musician is the complement of the scientist. The latter will superintend our knowing; the former will superintend our loving"<sup>4</sup> and thirdly, that music carries our emotion towards the Infinite and expands his assertion:

there comes but one testimony to the substantial efficacy of music in this matter of helping the emotion of man across the immensity of the known into the boundaries of the Unknown... It must be that there exists some sort of relation between pure tones and the spirit of man by virtue of which the latter is stimulated and forced onward toward the great end of all love and aspiration...It is through this relation of music to man that it becomes... a moral agent ...<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Silbermann, A. The Sociology of Music. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1963.P.8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.136.

<sup>3</sup>Lanier, S. Music and Poetry. New York. Greenwood Press. 1969. P.3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. P.18.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.19.20.

Lanier supports his enormous claims for the moral power of music by the judgement that any would-be artist who has not been morally "good" (a concept which is not defined) has therefore not been, in fact, a great artist.

The argument of it is merely this: the artist loves beauty supremely; because the good is beautiful, he will clamber continuously towards it...just as music increases in hearty acceptance among men so will this true artistic sense of the loveliness of morality spread, so will the attractiveness of all that is pure and lovely grow in power...<sup>1</sup>

Lanier's high evaluation of the moral power of music is not without precedent in philosophical and theological development. Many Twentieth Century philosophers would however require more evidence for his claims, and musicians would argue the issue of judging the greatness of an artist by his or her demonstration of moral character.

Each of the texts above proved to be tangential to the essence of the concerns of this thesis. The four texts ultimately chosen are concerned with the questions discussed in the introduction, and directly or indirectly offer ways of arriving at the desired end of suitable criteria for a philosophy of music, based on and consistent with a working philosophy of life. The first, The Meaning of Life, is a selection of writings, which its editor Klemke describes as "the most important essays (or chapters) that have been written on the meaning of life"<sup>2</sup>. The collection consists of essays by mainly Twentieth Century writers and philosophers, including two of the most famous, Bertrand Russell and Julian Huxley. In these writings, the question of the meaning of life is approached from three directions: the theistic answer, the non-theistic alternative, and the approach which questions the question of meaning. Reference to various selections from this collection will help us examine issues involved in forming a philosophy of life.

The other three texts illustrate the premise that a philosophy of music (as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. P.21.

<sup>2</sup>Klemke, E.D.(ed.), op. cit., Preface.

an aspect of the arts) is related to one's underlying philosophy of life. Dewey in his book, Art as Experience, Jenkins in Art and the Human Enterprise, and Ryken in Culture in Christian Perspective approach the arts from their "world view", from assumptions which underlie their particular philosophy of life in which the arts are of great significance. From an examination of these texts, and others related to them, criteria will be drawn relating to the need of the practising musician for a working personal philosophy of music.

CRITERIA FOR A PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

Having established the reasons for researching the current topic, the sense in which terminology is used, and the method of research, several criteria will now be proposed and explored through the writings of the Klemke essay collection, and the works of Dewey, Jenkins and Ryken.

Criterion no.1

A satisfying philosophy for a part of life, for example, music, needs to be grounded in a philosophy which covers the whole of life.

When John Dewey sets out to develop a theory or philosophy of art in his lectures Art as Experience, he explains that in order to arrive at the intended destination, it will first be necessary to take a detour; in that instance this involves "...going back to experience of the common or mill run of things to discover the aesthetic quality such experience possesses."<sup>1</sup> A similar approach seems necessary for the purposes of this thesis. The detour is the examination of the great concept of meaning itself as a means of understanding more clearly the issues of meaning in life and music. Precision of thought in this pursuit will be aided by the approach of linguistic philosophy, that emphasis in the discipline of philosophy which concerns itself with "what can and cannot be said, what is intelligible, and what is nonsensical."<sup>2</sup> Whereas many critics deride the approach of the proponents of linguistic philosophy, Kai Nielsen believes that it has something to offer in the significant task of clarifying meaning and purpose in life, the issues currently under scrutiny.

To begin with, Nielsen discusses the different ways in which the word

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<sup>1</sup>Dewey, J. Art as Experience. New York. Perigee Books. G.P.Putnam's Sons. 1980.P.11.

<sup>2</sup>Klemke, E.D., op.cit., p. 177.

"meaning" can be used. He shows that when we ask the question "what is the meaning of life", it is possible that we don't know exactly what we are asking, because the phrase does not have a clear use. This lack of clear use does not mean that the question is unimportant, or that it is, as suggested by the influential philosopher, A.J. Ayer, unanswerable.<sup>1</sup> But it does mean that we need to find out the extent to which it can be answered. By analysing in detail the literal answers to the question of meaning when understood as purpose, Nielsen concludes that what we are really asking when we use the words "What is the meaning of life", is, "What should we seek", or "What ends - if any - are worthy of attainment."<sup>2</sup> This leads also to discussion of the moral capacity of a human being and the responsibility of each individual to make choices, an activity which Ayer considers to be a matter beyond reason, and without guidelines other than the persuasiveness of one individual over another. On this Nielsen disagrees, since he sees moral choices as an issue open to reason.

As he continues to analyse the different underlying questions represented by the initial question on the meaning of life, Nielsen shows that while philosophers can give rational analyses and answers, an individual's question may not be asking what its words suggest. It may represent a cry from the heart rather than a rational seeking of information. If understanding is what the questioner is seeking, linguistic philosophy, can throw a great deal of light into the "darkness around the meaning-of-life questions"<sup>3</sup> by exploring the full range of word meanings and contexts.

Neilson's summary of his own position is that although linguistic philosophy can help us, we are at best, only moving towards an answer, not really in possession

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 181.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.200.

of all that it involves.

We must not anticipate that the answer can be given in a word or in a neat list. But this does not mean that we can do nothing towards answering these questions nor even that words will not help us. Indeed surely the historians, the scientists, the prophets, the dramatists and the poets have said much which will help any man who asks himself..."<sup>1</sup>

R.W. Hepburn draws together views of naturalistic and agnostic philosophers who reject the metaphysical and theological assumptions traditionally linked with this "bottom line" type question, and in examining the language of "meaning" seeks to reinforce their stance. Philosophers quoted include Kurt Baier, Antony Flew, and Kai Nielson.<sup>2</sup> Hepburn discusses usage which equates meaningfulness and purposiveness, so that to make life meaningful is the same as to pursue valuable and worthwhile ends. This leads to the further question of what constitutes such ends and therefore involves value judgements. Hepburn speaks of the danger of this issue of purpose involving dehumanisation by saying the extension of this question is "What are people for?"<sup>3</sup> He accuses theists of removing moral autonomy by the belief that humans are to give their lives into the control of another, namely God. He acknowledges that because of such experiences as Tolstoy's "arrest of life" it is simplistic to say meaning equals purpose - it leaves out too many exceptions. Nor is the search for meaning the same as the quest for wisdom of the theological or metaphysical kind, although Tolstoy felt that the peasants from whom he learnt how to live, did have supra-rational knowledge which he knew he lacked. Hepburn quotes Free, who disagrees with Tolstoy's description of the peasants' kind of knowledge: in Free's view they knew how to live, but this did not necessarily indicate a special source of knowledge. On meaningful living, Hepburn observes:

One may fill one's life with honest, useful and charitable deeds, not

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. P. 208.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 219, 210.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.211.



doubting them to be of value, but without feeling that these give one's life meaning or purpose. It may be profoundly boring. To seek meaning is not just a matter of seeking justification for one's policies, but of trying to discover how to organise one's vital resources and energies around these policies. To find meaning is not a matter of judging these worthy, but of seeing their pursuit as in some sense a fulfilment, as involving self-realisation as opposed to self-violation ...<sup>1</sup>

Hepburn adds a significant statement complementary to the above, and relevant to the purposes of this thesis: "Crucially, to know the meaning of life is to know how to live, as at one stage Tolstoy did not."<sup>2</sup>

This implies the question alluded to earlier in this paper, namely: can one be said to have found the meaning of life without having first consciously grappled with the problem? This question was mentioned in the section of the thesis defining philosophy: is one living out a philosophy of life if the matter has not been consciously thought about? Perhaps the peasants, whose example so influenced Tolstoy, had never had his problem of "arrest of life" depression; could they then be truly described as having reached a solution to the quest for meaning, granted that it was from them that Tolstoy found his answers? Speaking in philosophical terms, the bias from Free and Hepburn is in the negative, but Tolstoy's opinion remains: in their lives they certainly demonstrated a knowing, perhaps enjoyed subconsciously, that he lacked.

Another way of asking whether there is meaning in life is expressed in the question "Where does life lead ?" This question is often asked in the context of the immortality mortality debate, mortality being equated with lack of meaning. This simplification is not accepted by Hepburn, although the fact of mortality is recognised as a significant issue with implications about life and purpose for every living being. Hepburn refers to Yeats' recognition of this "...all life weighed in the balance of my own life seems to me a preparation for something that never

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

happens".<sup>1</sup> Beardsley, in this context, uses a musical analogy, distinguishing music of "introduction" quality from that which has "exhibition" quality, that is, the first has preparatory quality, the second fulfilment<sup>2</sup>

Further use is made of this analogy in a discussion of the expectations humans have of life. It is asserted that life can be valuable though not eternal just as a prelude has value if it is not expected to be a symphony. Meaning is perceived less clearly in some lives than in others. A particular philosophical stance judges certain lives as meaningless due to suffering caused by mental, physical or emotional handicaps or abuse. Furthermore, restoration or redemption of such lives is dismissed as impossible, even if there is truth in the concept of eternity in another dimension. To use the analogy of music again, no amount of bad "introductory" music can be compensated for by excellent "exhibition" music which may follow. Dewey's view is that the role of art is to make up that balance deficit that can exist in the ordinary experience of life, by giving completeness and balance:

Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is."<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the perplexing matter of these deep and decisive issues of meaning, Hepburn comments:

Some of the logical darkness around meaning-of-life questions comes from the uneasy awareness that there are alternative views, perspectives, more or less synoptic or selective in different ways, giving very different answers to questions of value, importance, futility. From this bewildering diversity the questioner seeks some release."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>2</sup>Beardsley, Monroe C., Aesthetics New York, 1958, pp.196 f.

<sup>3</sup>Dewey, J., op. cit., p.18.

<sup>4</sup>Klemke, E.D.,(ed.), op. cit., p. 220.

Release for some would be given through an "authoritative"<sup>1</sup> view. Hepburn disposes of the concept of an authoritative approach by saying that a view to this effect is either a psychological fact about one's perspective, or a value judgement, and that neither situation can claim authority.<sup>2</sup> He acknowledges that this is not the view of the Christian theist, because the doctrines of divine creation and incarnation bring about a resolution to the apparent impasse, in that the verdict is repudiated that in leaving the arena of the human, one is leaving simultaneously the theatre of mind, purpose and value, since the doctrines above give "promise of a harmony of perspectives." <sup>3</sup>

Kurt Baier rejects the proposition that worship of a supreme being gives meaning to life. In his view such a concept is morally objectionable because it "...involves a thoroughgoing self-abasement or self-annulment quite incompatible with the stance of a moral agent."<sup>4</sup> Hepburn is able to put the other side with insight:

... an act of worship need not be a submitting of oneself without insight to the wholly inscrutable. Moral perfection and beauty, fused in an intensifying strangeness are being celebrated, as these are believed to inhere in God. Evaluative reflection is being exercised: it is very far from abdicating... without cancelling the values, moral and aesthetic, that are celebrated in the act of worship, it powerfully intimates that they are nonetheless open to further transformation...<sup>5</sup>

Despite the positive values of worship acknowledged in the foregoing, Hepburn reminds the reader of the difficulties in proving the existence of the God who is worshipped.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p.222.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.223.

Having suggested possible ways of discussing and redefining the vocabulary of meaning, which he acknowledges is incomplete, Hepburn points out that atheistic existentialists have preferred to take the route of rejection of the vocabulary of meaning because of the confusion in its use; he however recommends:

an elucidatory and conservative tracing of senses of "the meaning of life" in literature and philosophy, and an attempt to see how differently the tasks of a life can look when they are viewed in the light of the many analogies of meaning."<sup>1</sup>

The article "Why" by Paul Edwards examines the meaning of the word and the way it should not be used, explaining that the "super ultimate why...introduces questions that are devoid of sense whether asked by ordinary people in their reflective moments or by philosophers."<sup>2</sup> With cogent rationality Edwards supports his position. But the fact remains that in common usage, people do ask and cry out "why...", and need help in clarifying that question whether it relates to music or any other aspect of life.

R.M. Hare in his article "Nothing Matters"<sup>3</sup>, illustrates the importance of understanding the context and purpose of words and the different ways in which they can be used. He comments, "It is very easy to assume that all words work in the same way; to show the differences is one of the chief ways in which philosophers can be of significance to mankind."<sup>4</sup> The graphic biographical example he gives shows the consequence for a young, impressionable man of not understanding the context of the words "nothing matters" in a book he had read, leading him to an agonising struggle as to the meaning of his own life. By coming to an understanding of what was actually being communicated through analysis of the text, his crisis of meaning and value was averted.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.226.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>3</sup>Klemke, E.D., op. cit.,p. 241.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

The substance of the article is to declare that "man, as a matter of empirical fact, is a valuing creature..."<sup>1</sup>, his concerns are many, and they "matter" to him. Circumstances of life lead to periods of crises in values, which are opportunities to reflect and re-emphasise, or to stagnate.

In Professor Joske's article "Philosophy and the Meaning of Life," he develops his case for "...the claim that there are strong analogies between human life and a futile activity."<sup>2</sup> He does not see this as a totally pessimistic stance, because "...an activity may be valuable even though not fully meaningful"<sup>3</sup>. He further considers "We...can value life even if we believe that it is futile, and an active life may be fruitful in that it is productive of unexpectedly valuable consequences."<sup>4</sup> He states too that a pessimist is not exempted, by his pessimism, from the responsibility that he must choose and give meaning to his choices. Finally, he expresses the hope that "the basic capacities which make us human"<sup>5</sup> are capable of being fulfilled. His final pessimistic words are "A philosopher, even though he enjoys living, is entitled to feel some resentment towards a world in which the goals that he must seek are forever unattainable."<sup>6</sup>

To sum up, the foregoing discussions on the meaning of meaning do not claim a neat and tidy answer to the question of meaning in any context. They nevertheless encourage rather than discourage the seeking of an answer, as they link concern about clarity of terminology with the human questions and concerns lying behind the common usage of the word "meaning." This section of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>2</sup>Klemke, E.D., op. cit. p.

<sup>3</sup>Klemke, E.D., op. cit.,p.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p.260.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

collection of writings on the meaning of life fulfils the aim stated by one of its contributors, Kai Neilson:

With reference to the concepts of human purpose, religion and the problematical notion "the meaning of life", I want to show how in certain crucial respects linguistic philosophy can be relevant to the perplexities about life and conduct that reflective people actually face...to show how the use of the analytical techniques of linguistic philosophy can help us in coming to grips with the problems of human purpose and the meaning of life.<sup>1</sup>

Having discussed the worthwhileness of the question of meaning, the first criterion can now be pursued from the other two aspects explored in The Meaning of Life, the theistic answer and the non-theistic alternative.

In his essay "The Dignity of Human Life," David F. Swenson speaks of the necessity for preparation and training for "an existence in the present"<sup>2</sup> (for example, tertiary music study,) which he calls "a preparation for the external life".<sup>3</sup> He goes on to refer to a "something else...so fundamentally important that in its absence every other form of preparation is revealed as imperfect and incomplete, even ineffective and futile."<sup>4</sup> Swenson uses the terminology "a view of life",<sup>5</sup> which he defines as:

...a principle of living, a spirit and an attitude capable of maintaining its unity and identity with itself in all of life's complexities... A view of life is not objective knowledge, but subjective conviction... It is the dominant attitude of the spirit which gives life its direction and its goal.<sup>6</sup>

In his elucidation of this "view of life", Swenson explores the idea that that which makes one happy, which could include friends, health, satisfying creative work, goods, pleasant living circumstances etc., might be synonymous with purpose and

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<sup>1</sup>Klemke, E.D., op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

meaning in life. Writers and philosophers, from the time of Aristotle to the present day have proposed that such is the case.<sup>1</sup> Swenson points out that, despite the wide ranging appeal of such objectives, they tend, by their nature, to cause division rather than unity in the individual personality. They are also precarious, and could leave one without reason to live in hard times, when they could disappear; they might not lead to good results in a person's life, being of themselves neutral, and they are not universal. The view of life needs to rest on foundations that are more secure.

Swenson does not argue for, but simply states, that human beings are created by God, whose character is moral, therefore human beings have that same moral awareness. It is only as we respond to the sense of the moral within, the voice of the Spirit of God, that we will have a strong enough foundation in life to bring a unity into all that we think, do and say.

We have too long lost ourselves in anxious considerations of what it may mean to be a shoemaker or a philosopher, a poet or a millionaire; in order to find ourselves, it is needful that we concentrate our energies upon the infinitely significant problem of what it means simply to be a man, without any transiently qualifying adjectives.<sup>2</sup>

Swenson, in his second essay in the *Meaning of Life* collection "The Transforming Power of Otherworldliness", and Reinhold Niebuhr, in "The Self and its Search for Ultimate Meaning", seek to place the significance of humanity in an eternal perspective. On this issue, Swenson, greatly influenced by the existentialist philosopher Kierkegaard, explores the effect of believing in an eternal dimension to life, a concept including the reality of the unseen and the incompleteness of even the best and most successful earthly life. In his view, "...to bestow an infinite interest upon a finite value is the torturing self-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

contradiction of the mere worldly life."<sup>1</sup> The eternal perspective gives value to every life, because in the Christian understanding of eternity, every person is welcome to partake of the relationship offered by God in Jesus Christ. Therefore in this life too, each is of value, no matter how apparently unequal opportunities differ from culture to culture, or from one individual to another. Success and failure, riches or poverty, health or sickness are less the issue, than how one lives. Earthly experience is not the "be all and end all", since hope in the eternal enables both full living in the present, and a purpose which transcends the present and the past.

Niebuhr questions the tendency to equate mind with self because "the error obscures the freedom of the self over its rational faculties."<sup>2</sup> Self possesses a dimension beyond the mind, enabling a discerning of "...a mystery and meaning above and beyond the rational faculties in themselves."<sup>3</sup> He believes that this has been demonstrated in the course of philosophical thought from the time of Hume and Kant, when Hume's initial scepticism led Kant to distinguish between confidence in reason and confidence in a rational ontological order. Now, even in modern philosophical thought there are mystical overtones, as evidenced by such contributions as "Mysticism and Logic" by Bertrand Russell, because, Niebuhr believes, explicit religion must reappear in some form, even where the rational is supposed to have removed all mystery. He further demonstrates his case by an analysis of the thought of Professor Stace, who had embraced the philosophy of Huxley and the oriental mystics, and Santayana who sums up his ultimate conclusion:

Spirituality is the supreme good for those who are called to it, the few intellectuals who can be satisfied only by the impartial truth and by the

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<sup>1</sup>Klemke, E.D., op.cit., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Klemke E.D., op.cit., P.41

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



self-annihilating contemplation of all being.<sup>1</sup>

Niebuhr's article covers a huge canvas, as he links the meaning of the individual self, with either the denial or the affirmation of the reality and meaning of history itself:

From Aristotle to Santayana, mysticism is in fact the perennial overtone of rationalism. The drama of history is not comprehended in the category of meanings supplied by either the rationalists or the mystics. In the one case the categories fail to comprehend the dramatic variety and the complex causal relations of history. In the other case the mystic conception of the fulfilment of meaning obviously results in the annulment of any particular meaning in history.<sup>2</sup>

For Niebuhr, the evidence of the experience of human beings, the course of history, and the failure of any rational or mystical philosophy to take full account of all the facts, all point to the validity and the "genius of Biblical faith".<sup>3</sup> The latter declares the significance of individual selfhood, takes account of humanity as it is, but does not pretend to be a total explanation, rather

it discerns by faith, glimpses of meaning in the ultimate mystery ("the light that shineth in the darkness") which furnish the keys to the understanding of directly experienced realities. The fragmentariness and brevity of life, united to its dignity, is a mystery which is made meaningful by the promise of a fulfilment which is beyond the capacity of man.<sup>4</sup>

The representation of the theistic view of the meaning of life always acknowledges the necessity for the "faith" ingredient in coming to terms with the meaning of life, and the element of "revelation", which is beyond reason, but not, it is implied, contradictory to it. Rather, as Niebuhr points out, reality is greater than rationality, yet it is through reason that we are able to understand that this is so.

The hope that both the individual and the total drama of life will end in "the forgiveness of sins: the resurrection of the body: and the life

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 42: Niebuhr quoting Santayana, George. Platonism and the Spiritual Life. pp. 34-40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

everlasting," is thus the natural fruit of the faith that there is a height and depth of reality in God in which the individual in his uniqueness and freedom has a reality which the coherences of nature and reason do not assure him, and in which the endless dramatic variations of his collective life also have significance ultimately.<sup>1</sup>

The essays chosen to represent the theistic view on the meaning of life claim that the many aspects of human life need a perspective and interpretation beyond the realm of immediate sense perception. In line with the proposed first criterion that a philosophy of music needs to be grounded in a philosophy covering the whole of life, the assertion of the theist is that life, or any of its parts, only makes sense when the reality of God is taken into account. This conclusion is reached by a combination of logic and faith. As we will now see, the position of the non-theist, although opposite, is arrived at by that same combination.

As one moves on to study views on the meaning of life from the non-theistic stance, one is impressed in the article by Bertrand Russell, by his honesty as to the starkness of the human situation and the conclusion he draws. He assesses the pessimistic conclusions of science on the nature of being and ceasing to be, as "...if not quite beyond dispute...so nearly certain that no philosophy that rejects them can hope to stand..."<sup>2</sup> This leaves us with purposelessness for "...man, with his knowledge of good and evil, is but a helpless atom in a world which has no such knowledge..."<sup>3</sup>

Russell describes man as a worshipper, and traces his worshipping history from his earliest beginnings (as science portrays him), powerless before the omnipotent forces of nature, that is, power in its starkness. Now man needs to choose again the god he will worship: evil, which exists, or the creation of our own conscience:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Klemke, E.D., op.cit. pp.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

Let us preserve our respect for truth, for beauty, for the ideal of perfection which life does not permit us to attain...If power is bad, as it seems to be, let us reject it from our hearts. In this lies man's true freedom: in determination to worship only the God created by our own love of the good, to respect only the heaven which inspires the insight of our best moments... Let us learn, then, that energy of faith which enables us to live constantly in the vision of the good...<sup>1</sup>

Extraordinarily, the point of faith has again been reached, but this time by the non-theist, not the theist. It would certainly seem that faith is necessary for living, a faith accorded, by Russell's reasoning, to that which is worthy of worship, the god of one's own choice, for even the non-theist must worship. Put another way, for life to have meaning, the point of despair must be overcome, as must the dominance of self-centredness, and of bitter rebellion, when all does not work out in the way one would have desired, till the point of "the great renunciation" is reached:

But passive renunciation is not the whole of wisdom; for not by renunciation alone can we build a temple for the worship of our own ideals. Haunting foreshadowings of the temple appear in the realm of imagination, in music, in architecture, in the untroubled kingdom of reason... there is a cavern of darkness to be traversed before that temple can be entered. The gate of the cavern is despair, and its floor is paved with the gravestone of abandoned hopes. There self must die; there the eagerness, the greed of untamed desire, must be slain, for only so can the soul be freed from the empire of Fate. But out of the cavern, the Gate of Renunciation leads again to the daylight of wisdom, by whose radiance a new insight, a new joy, a new tenderness, shine forth to gladden the pilgrim's heart.<sup>2</sup>

In the Epilogue to *The Meaning of Life*, Bertrand Russell is given the last word. He speaks of his search in life for love, knowledge and pity. In his view, these are the qualities which in the presence of "omnipotent matter,"<sup>3</sup> "irresistible forces"<sup>4</sup> and "the trampling march of unconscious power,"<sup>5</sup> have made life worth

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 57, 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.59.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

living. Thus it seems that both the theist and the non-theist arrive frequently at the same conclusions as to what gives life meaning, although the basis on which they build may be so very different.

The collection of writings on the meaning of life illustrates consistently, from widely differing philosophical and world views, the fact that once one begins to look seriously at the issue of meaning in life, one is involved in a search, the ramifications of which have effects on the whole of life, including for the purposes of this thesis, one's understanding of the place of the arts and one's involvement in them. One's personal world-view might be anywhere along the scale of complete atheism to fervent belief in the living, omnipotent creator, but without some reasoned understanding of personal significance and purpose, and a sense that life is worth living, continuation of vital involvement in any part of life, including the practice of music, becomes increasingly difficult, hence the proposal that a satisfying philosophy for a part of life, for example music, needs to be built on a philosophy which covers the whole of life.

As a corollary, it must be noted that the discovery of music, or another of the arts, can be in itself, a great source of purpose and meaning in the life of an individual. Music can be part of that which sustains life, gives personal comfort, and a direction in life. It can also be a means of escaping reality. However human beings need to be undergirded on the emotional, the cognitive, and the spiritual level. In a valid philosophy of life and of music, each level will be satisfied and in harmony.

### Criterion no. 2

A philosophy of music for the practising musician must account for art in terms of its relationship to the origin and nature of man.

John Dewey's book Art as Experience began its life in 1931 as a series of lectures on the topic Philosophy of Art, on which he was asked to speak in a lectureship set up in honour of the late William James (1842-1910). Both men are famous scholars in the sphere of philosophy on both the American and the world scene. James, initially a medical doctor, with a longing to be a great painter, but without the necessary gifting, became noted for his contribution to philosophical thought. By the end of his life, he was widely regarded as the chief representative of American philosophy. John Dewey (1859-1952) during the course of his life also became America's most influential philosopher and educator, as well as an outspoken champion of social reform.

Dewey states at the outset that philosophy needs to account for the existence of art, and this would seem to be a criterion of a well-based philosophy of music for the practising musician. What is one to understand by this term "account for"? I believe that this means to search out as thoroughly as one is able, the origins, purpose and significance for human beings of the phenomenon of art. This in turn means looking with equal thoroughness at the enormous question of the origins and purpose in life of humanity and of the individual human being. Dewey takes this route as do the other authors, Jenkins and Ryken. From their individual understanding of the origins of the world and of human beings in the world, each assumes that humanity is of great worth, and that the role of art within the human experience is also of vital significance.

Dewey's starting point expresses faith in the Darwinian evolutionist position:

While man is other than bird and beast, he shares basic vital functions with them and has to make the same basal adjustments if he is to continue the process of living. Having the same vital needs, man derives the means by which he breathes, moves, looks and listens, the very brain with which he co-ordinates his senses and his movements, from his animal forbears. The organs with which he maintains himself in being are not of himself alone,

but by the grace of struggles and achievements of a long line of animal ancestry.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of his in-depth description of art as experience, Dewey often comments on the place of religion and the supernatural in the experience of humankind. But at no stage does he admit to this being any more than "a reversion",<sup>2</sup> a matter of psychology,<sup>3</sup> or of "the aesthetic need for satisfaction of the imagination rather than... any strict demand of unemotional evidence for rational interpretation."<sup>4</sup> He further rejects any idea of human origins being other than totally material and explicable by reference to the evolutionary process when he states:

Apart from organs inherited from animal ancestry, idea and purpose would be without a mechanism of realisation. The primeval arts of nature and animal life are so much the material, and, in gross outline, so much the model for the intentional achievements of man, that the theologically minded have imputed conscious intent to the structure of nature - as man, sharing many activities with the ape, is wont to think of the latter as imitating his own performances.<sup>5</sup>

Continuing with this understanding of how human beings came to be, Dewey elaborates on the kind of world in which the human creature finds himself: this creature, "the organism",<sup>6</sup> is in an environment fraught with danger, but possessing the means by which the dangers and difficulties can be overcome. However, it is up to the human being to exert energy, resourcefulness, initiative, in fact whatever the particular hurdle calls for, in order to come to some sort of equilibrium with nature. Of the nature of life and experience he states:

At every moment the living creature is exposed to dangers from its surroundings, and at every moment, it must draw upon something in

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<sup>1</sup>Dewey, J., op.cit., p.13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

its surroundings to satisfy its needs."<sup>1</sup>

The essence of living is that the organism is faced with such danger, and in the facing, either fails and dies, or overcomes and grows. Conflict is overcome, and equilibrium is reached. This is the essence of experience, and also in Dewey's understanding, the essence of the aesthetic or artistic in life. His theory of art is vitally connected with the way life is, and his desire to bring back the connectedness of art in all its forms to its essential source, (the interaction and adaption of the living creature with the environment), is the burden of this series of lectures. Life is a moving through disruption to harmonious order; in this sequence, Dewey proposes that the essence of that which we call music originates in experience in its most basic form: there is rhythm as discord is resolved in harmony and leads to consummation. He covers too the fact that this interaction of the live creature with its environment is not objective and cold: things are either hostile or favourable, that is, the experience of the environment is emotional, just as the idea of art or of the aesthetic also involves the emotions. Dewey thus develops, in detail, a theory of art and of the aesthetic, on the basis that in this evolving material world in which the living creature (the organism) finds himself, the main aim of life is to come into harmony of relationship, and to grow, through the overcoming of conflict with the surrounding environment. This process constitutes experience and the nature of that experience is the germ of art and the aesthetic:

Inner harmony is attained only when, by some means, terms are made with the environment... In the process of living, attainment of a period of equilibrium is at the same time initiation of a new relation to the environment, one that brings with it potency of new adjustments to be made through struggle. The time of consummation is also one of beginning anew. Any attempt to perpetuate beyond its term the enjoyment attending the time of fulfilment and harmony constitutes withdrawal from the world... But, through the phases of perturbation and conflict, there abides the deep-seated memory of an underlying harmony, the sense of which haunts life like

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

the sense of being founded on a rock."<sup>1</sup>

In Dewey's thinking this "underlying harmony" like "the sense of being founded on a rock", a description of a quite profound sense of security and purpose in being, is totally explained by his evolutionary ancestry, the experience of the continual process of adaptation which has always gone on. The evolutionary process is the total answer to every aspect of man's being:

Apart from relations of cause and effect in nature, conception and invention could not be. Apart from the relation of processes of rhythmic conflict and fulfilment in animal life, experience would be without design and pattern. Apart from organs inherited from animal ancestry, idea and purpose would be without a mechanism of realisation. The primeval arts of nature and animal life are so much the material, and, in gross outline, so much the model for the intentional achievements of man, that the theologically minded have imputed conscious intent to the structure of nature... <sup>2</sup>

Iredell Jenkins (1909-) became professor of philosophy at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa in 1949, and was chairman of the department until 1978. His career has included the position of senior fellow in law and behavioural science at the University of Chicago 1959-60 and lecturer at the University of Notre Dame in 1973.<sup>3</sup> Jenkins sets out in "Art and the Human Enterprise", that his chief concern is:

to lay bare the genesis of art in the general human situation, and the function of art in the total human enterprise. <sup>4</sup>

In this task, he too, like Dewey, and in line with the argument of this thesis, has felt that art in all its aspects needs to be contextualized. This he sees requires not only the "pre-aesthetic consideration of the human psyche, of which art is one principal manifestation,"<sup>5</sup> but also a depicting of "what I take to be man's past

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Locher, Frances C.,(Ed.), Contemporary Authors. Gale Research Company, 1982.

<sup>4</sup>Jenkins, I., op.cit., p.2.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.4.



genesis and present status in the universe."<sup>1</sup> Jenkins states:

with respect to the fundamental issue, that concerning the nature of man and man's situation in the universe, I shall accept as my point of departure the general theory of evolution.<sup>2</sup>

Like Dewey, he puts strong emphasis on the role of conscious experience in the point of development that man has reached in his adaptation to the environment:

Experience is a means of carrying on transactions with the world, so it is only reasonable to suppose that it is patterned to the character of the environment and the situation that this imposes upon man. Experience is purposive in precisely this sense, that it has arisen and developed as a means of solving the problem of adaptation.<sup>3</sup>

However, unlike Dewey, Jenkins accepts that the hypothesis of evolution is just a hypothesis: "... I shall accept as my point of departure the general theory of evolution."<sup>4</sup> He states that in his view, a great many crucial issues are left unanswered by it, including that of "the ultimate beginnings of man, or of anything else."<sup>5</sup> He goes on to make a distinction between using the terms of evolution in their most limited, biological sense, and using them in a far broader, philosophical and open-ended manner, since he wishes to make his own position clear. He believes:

...the principle of evolution... places no inherent limitations upon the forces and agents that control its processes, upon the realms of Being that the environment contains, or upon the powers that are present in man and the possibilities that are open to him... As a process, evolution is perfectly hospitable to - though it must also be emphasised that it does not necessarily demand - the concepts of purpose, progress, mind, spirit and God; of all principles, it should encourage us to approach and use it with an open mind rather than a closed one.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.9.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.11.

Leland Ryken, like Dewey and Jenkins, is American by nationality, an author of several books and professor of English at the overtly christian institution, Wheaton College. His understanding of art in the human context is firmly linked to the acceptance of the christian view of the origin and nature of humankind as expressed in biblical revelation. The significance of the doctrine of biblical revelation is equal to the significance of the theory of evolution in its implications for understanding any aspect of the human situation: both need to be accepted by faith, but the conclusions which follow lead in very different directions. This applies equally when considering a philosophy of life or more specifically, a philosophy of art, including music.

Ryken, due to his basic assumptions (which he, like Dewey and Jenkins, states but does not set out to prove or defend), sets art in the context of the created order:

The Bible teaches that God created all that exists, including both the natural creation and people. No other doctrine has such far-reaching implications for the arts.<sup>1</sup>

He goes on to explain that this crucial doctrine of creation means that God is the model of humanity's artistic (and by logical inference, intellectual) capacities, that He is the source of the beautiful as well as the functional, but that He is separate from the created order;and significantly:

The fact that humans are created in God's image provides a sanction for human creativity and a theological explanation of why people create.<sup>2</sup>

The final point Ryken makes in regard to the importance of the doctrine of creation is that:

The doctrine of creation "ex nihilo" has given christians a model for regarding artists as capable of creating, through their imagination, works for which there are no existing models that fully account for them, and it

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<sup>1</sup>Ryken, L., op.cit., p.14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

allows christians to revel in originality...<sup>1</sup>

In accounting for the existence and significance of art, Dewey, Jenkins and Ryken each felt the necessity of beginning at the beginning, with the genesis of man, and set out to do so, according to their own basic assumptions. Dewey presents the classic evolutionary viewpoint, Jenkins a more speculative, open-ended version of the same, and Ryken, at the other extreme, the classic biblical\christian creationist doctrine. The practising musician who is seeking a basis for life and music (a philosophy to live and work by) will find value in considering each of the foregoing accounts of the reason for the existence of the arts. While each will draw his own conclusions as to their relative validity, it is apparent that a philosophy of music must account for music in terms of its relationship to the origin and nature of man.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

### Criterion no. 3

A philosophy of music for the practising musician requires a definition of the nature of art, including music.

Having set their scene, each writer continues the "accounting for art" in detail. As is to be expected, Dewey's analysis involves a complex and detailed linking of the artistic and aesthetic in human beings with the concept and definition of experience, the key concept in his philosophical thought and contribution as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Early in the development of Dewey's thinking, the concept of an organic whole, of which human life is a part, and an emphasis on the consequent interdependence and interrelatedness of all things, was deeply satisfying to Dewey on the emotional and intellectual level. Later he rejected this way of thinking and, strongly influenced by the empirical method in the sciences, he looked to a more careful, detailed, scientific articulation of the organic character of experience, which he took to be the primary unit of life. He came to the view that life consists of a series of overlapping and interpenetrating experiences, and believed that the non-cognitive and non-reflective experiences of doing, suffering and enjoying were the right context for all knowing and inquiry. He saw all inquiry as an art, therefore all of life is or can be artistic.<sup>2</sup> Life is made up of experience, and he speaks of "...the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art..."<sup>3</sup> Those whose gift it is to capture life for us on canvas or in dance, music, or some other way, are in Dewey's view using as their raw material the experience of life which we all have.

Definition of the term "aesthetic", like discussion on the question of what

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<sup>1</sup>Edwards, P. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Volume Two, Macmillan Co., and The Free Press, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Dewey, J., *op.cit.*, p.1.

is art, is renowned for the controversy it produces. To Dewey, who wants to proceed from life in the raw, aesthetic means simply the enjoyment of that which totally takes one's attention to the exclusion, at the time, of all else:

...genuine interest, satisfaction and care, genuine affection for one's activity e.g. that of a motor mechanic, is aesthetic, artistic engagement.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose and meaning of the arts is "the intensification of the sense of immediate living"<sup>2</sup> because the arts in their own time and place, as opposed to their frequent setting in a museum, a concert hall or an art gallery, were and are "enhancements of the process of everyday living." Speaking against modern day separation of the arts and life, Dewey contrasts the role of all the arts in observable tribal life, (e.g. in the aboriginal tribal lifestyle,) with the "concert" style experience and involvement of western civilisation.<sup>3</sup>

Music and song were intimate parts of the rites and ceremonies in which the meaning of group life was communicated.<sup>4</sup>

Dewey's thrust of argument is that this is the meaning, the true place of all the arts in society. Art should not exist for its own sake, but as an integral part of the whole experience of life, because by definition, the very process of art, in its most true and basic sense, cannot be separated from the process of living: the struggle, the overcoming, the achieving of equilibrium. The separation of the two, for example in much of western society as we know it, has occurred because of the impingement on society of economic and other political factors, which have divorced the arts from the experience of everyday life. He sums up his understanding of the connections between life experience, art and the distinctively aesthetic:

Experience in the degree in which it is experience is heightened vitality. Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.6

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events. Instead of signifying surrender to caprice and disorder, it affords our sole demonstration of a stability that is not stagnation but is rhythmic and developing. Because experience is the fulfilment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is aesthetic experience.<sup>1</sup>

Dewey relates all experience to the one source: from the mundane ordinariness of domesticity, which may find its artistic expression in potted earthenware cups and bowls, to the richness of religious symbolism, from the spontaneous mystical awareness in nature "...that renders it so akin as an experience to what religionists term ecstatic communion..."<sup>2</sup> to the "...resonances of dispositions acquired in primitive relationships of the living being to its surroundings..."<sup>3</sup> One seeks, in searching for the meaning of art, to find an explanation which satisfies the depth, breadth and height of one's own accumulated experiences and those shared by so many in the course of western culture's recorded artistic sharing of experience. Dewey acknowledges the inclination of humanity to designate spiritual and ideal meaning to the range of sensuous experience which is part of our fund of known human experience, but the explanation of the source is fixed, immutable: every light and shade of human awareness and experience has its roots in the struggle and overcoming of our animal forbears, and the meaning and root of the artistic and the aesthetic is there too.

Dewey has a high view of the significance, unique meaning and role of art in our life and in society. Experience is our interaction with the world around and within. In this ongoing process apathy, torpor, conceit and familiarity are hazards

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.28.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

whose existence can diminish the importance of that of which we are a part.

Art throws off the covers that hide the expressiveness of experienced things; it quickens us from the slackness of routine and enables us to forget ourselves by finding ourselves in the delight of experiencing the world about us in its varied qualities and forms. It intercepts every shade of expressiveness found in objects and orders them in a new experience of life.<sup>1</sup>

One way in which art can be a vital enricher of community experience is longingly envisioned by Dewey, as he compares the external organisation increasing daily in society with the true unifying that can come about in a community by collective involvement in artistic endeavour or experience:

Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life. But they are also marvellous aids in the creation of such a life.<sup>2</sup>

Many practising musicians working in schools have experienced this phenomenon, particularly in producing school operettas, or musicals, school plays or concerts, where many of the students and staff are involved. From such a working together has come a bonding in relationship and enhanced sense of corporate identity, along with the actual achievement of the initial goal of staging a school production. Even in the increasing occurrence of "Opera in the Park" in Sydney or outdoor concerts on the riverbank in Adelaide, there is a sense of the ideal Dewey expresses "...a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity."<sup>3</sup>

A further significant role in communication is allotted by Dewey to art, pinpointing in his view another aspect of its meaning:

...the artist works to create an audience to which he does communicate. In the end, works of art are the only media of complete and unhindered communication between man and man that can occur in a world full of gulfs

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.104.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.81.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

and walls that limit community of experience.<sup>1</sup>

Here we need to explore what Dewey means by communication, and what is commonly understood by the word. Given that in common usage, "communication" means coming to a shared understanding of an issue or issues, this latter statement of Dewey is expressive more of a longing that such an avenue of communication might exist, than of the truth that it actually does. In practice, unless the composer, author or poet actually spells out his intentions as to the meaning of the work of art being shared, many will be the views as to its interpretation; and it can be, that even given the artist's expressed conviction as to the meaning of a work, others will still authoritatively differ. The painting "Blue Poles", work of the artist Jackson Pollock was bought by the Australian government and hung in the National Art Gallery in Canberra, Australia. It was the subject of extraordinary controversy, for the combined reasons that it was very costly, and that many doubted its meaning and value as a work of art. Historically, such has been the case across the whole range of art, from architecture (for example the furore over the artistic merit of the Opera House, Sydney, Australia), to music (did Berlioz actually compose "music" or is that the wrong term for it!). Another musical instance is described by Deryck Cooke, in notes on the Symphony No.3 in D Minor by Gustav Mahler. Mahler(1860-1911) wrote of it, in a letter to the great dramatic soprano Anna Bahr-Mildenburgh:

Just imagine a work of such magnitude that it mirrors the whole world - one is so to speak, only an instrument, played on by the universe... In it the whole of nature finds a voice...<sup>2</sup>

Mahler's idea in this symphony was a conception of existence in its totality, beginning with creation out of nothing, and proceeding through the various stages of being, "...from vegetable and animal, through mankind and the angels, to the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.,p.105.

<sup>2</sup>Cooke, Deryck.(Quoting Mahler.) Notes on Symphony No. 3 in D Minor, Mahler.London, The Decca Recording Company Ltd., 1968., p.4.



love of God".<sup>1</sup> However, when the young Schoenberg heard it, in 1904, he wrote to Mahler saying:

I think I have experienced your symphony. I felt the struggle for illusions; I felt the pain of one disillusioned; I saw the forces of evil and good contending; I saw a man in a torment of emotion exerting himself to gain inner harmony. I sensed a human being, a drama, truth, the most ruthless truth!<sup>2</sup>

As Cooke comments, the difference between the inner meaning perceived by Schoenberg and that described by Mahler faces us with the question as to how relevant even the composer's own view of the meaning of a work might be; so returning to Dewey's ideal of communication through art, can it be described as "complete and unhindered",<sup>3</sup> when such differing interpretations are possible over the same work of art? Dewey would answer this question by differentiating between the precision of a statement as to meaning, such as Mahler himself endeavoured to express in describing the symphony, and the function of a work of art in expression, which Dewey does not require to be specific, although many others may. As an example of his point he states, "Science states meanings; art expresses them."<sup>4</sup> Art is not representation, as a photo may be, but simply expression as it presents to us the familiar in new ways, and enlivens us to their expressiveness.

In music there are many examples of the variation in interpreted meaning of the one work. One can perform to a group of children, and individuals within the group will have different impressions as to what the meaning of the music really was. At the end of such an exercise, one feels free to say that the composer did not actually say what the meaning was to him, and there is scope for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.5.

<sup>3</sup>Dewey, J., op.cit., p.105.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.84.

individuality of response. In another situation, the music may have a profound effect on one individual: stir the emotions or the imagination, and a companion be left stone cold emotionally and devoid of any fresh stimulus to the imagination. Has there been genuine communication in the first instance and none in the second? Who is to say that even in the first instance there was untrammelled communication between composer and listener? Perhaps the experience of the first listener had nothing at all to do with the composer's original understanding of the work created, but arose out of her subjective situation which coincided with the perceived mood and meaning of the music. All who are sensitive to art in its varied forms have a sense of a strong element of communication involved. The composer Mahler actually felt that he was not so much the composer as "...an instrument being played on by some unknown power..."<sup>1</sup> Despite Dewey's statement about untrammelled communication, which led to the discussion and examples above, he also says that,

A work of art no matter how old and classic is actually, not just potentially, a work of art only when it lives in some individualised experience... It is absurd to ask what an artist really meant by his product: he himself would find different meanings in it at different days and hours and in different stages of his own development...<sup>2</sup>

Dewey, and many others who are lovers of art, know that there is an experience of communication through art, but on the report of many, the question remains, from whom or what specifically does the communication proceed and how specific is its message; and if it is not specific, how accurately is it described as communication? In Dewey's reckoning the initial work of art comes out of the experience of the artist, and the receiving by another of that work of art is also a vital experience. On the basis of vital experience in both cases, "communication" has occurred. The meaning of art is expression and "Those who

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<sup>1</sup>Cooke, Deryck, op.cit., p.5.

<sup>2</sup>Dewey, J., op.cit., p.108.

are moved feel, as Tolstoy says, that what the work expresses is as if it were something one had oneself been longing to express."<sup>1</sup>

What is the meaning of art according to Iredell Jenkins? How does he account for the extraordinary phenomenon in life of the existence of art in its varied forms? To Jenkins, art is a vital and coherent element of the human context, a part of human nature having its source in the human spirit. Artistic activity is not a mere decoration to life, it does not merely channel some deeper drive, it is an expression of a particular aspect of the nature of human kind which needs to be particularly exercised; no other activity takes its place. His belief, which he seeks to substantiate through the course of his thesis, is that "...art exists for life's sake ... life could not exist without art."<sup>2</sup> A key to Jenkins' position is gained in the statement:

Man creates art - as he creates science, morality and all other disciplines and products - because it is only by so doing that he can consummate his acquaintance with the world and realize the possibilities that life offers him.<sup>3</sup>

In Jenkins' view, all the conglomerate activities of humans can be seen as the working out of the evolutionary principle of adaption to the environment. In the transactions involved in the adaptive process, the aspects of the "import of things",<sup>4</sup> the "particularity of things",<sup>5</sup> and the "connectedness of things",<sup>6</sup> combine to give an overview of what is involved in life, they are the tripartite dimensions of successfully experienced living. On these three aspects Jenkins builds "psychic components", which he says "...reflect the character of their adaptive situation and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.105.

<sup>2</sup>Jenkins, I., op.cit., P.4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 12,13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.,p.15.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.16.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

they operate in a way to keep man's experience and activity appropriate to this situation"<sup>1</sup> The aesthetic, the affective and the cognitive components:

...create the perspectives from which we regard things and the dimensions of experience into which we absorb things. Finally, in the ultimate reaches of their influence, these components are the agents that are responsible for the whole range of human creativity and the whole panorama of human artefacts. All of the enterprises, disciplines and products that we refer to collectively as culture - art, science, morality, religion, engineering, etc. - have their origin and assume their character under the directive force of these components.<sup>2</sup>

Jenkins deals with each of these components in detail. Here we can look only at the briefest connections for each. The affective component involves the emotions, leading to purposes, values and technology in the sense of using things according to our values, in order to control our situation. The cognitive component has to do with the forming of ideas and theories, and the aesthetic component concerns our forming of images, their expression and the resultant art. While he sees the latter component as the one which operates most acutely for the artist, Jenkins is at pains to point out that:

psychic components all function at all times. Attention is at all times a compound of affective, cognitive and aesthetic moments: everything of which we become aware is in that very process viewed from these perspectives... it is necessary to insist upon the fact of the cohesiveness and integrity of life...<sup>3</sup>

Jenkins, like Dewey, draws out in his total analysis of art the centrality of experience to artistic, aesthetic expression in any form. Experience too is basically aesthetic, cognitive or affective. It occurs at different levels of intensity, but with regard to art, it is the wellspring from which all artistic expression proceeds, from reception and activity through to construction:

Aesthetic appreciation is one major guise under which man makes the acquaintance of things. Artistic creation is one of the refined employments of experience through which he presses this first acquaintance closer to the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.45.

contours of things. Art is one of the issues of experience in which one man embodies his vision of the world and so enriches and refines the vision of other men.<sup>1</sup>

In seeking to come himself and to bring his readers into a deeper understanding of the meaning of art, Jenkins speaks of some of the paradoxes of aesthetics and his opinion as to why they exist. The experience of art is at once disinterested and intense. A work of art can be accused of distorting reality because of techniques used, yet there is at the same time a perspective given to reality, a fresh approach. Artists are often described as both creators and discoverers. This latter paradox leads Jenkins into a discussion of an area in art and aesthetics which in his view is distinctly unacceptable in our age but towards which he is clearly very sympathetic. This is the problem of claiming for art "...a definite ontological status":<sup>2</sup>

The paradox of art as both unrealistic and revelatory thus arises not from any internal inconsistency in the aesthetic life, but rather from the inability of aesthetic theory to account for a characteristic that this life quite unequivocally asserts for itself. That is, it arises because theory cannot identify an order or aspect of reality that art alone discloses.<sup>3</sup>

Jenkins' view is that the last thinker to take art really seriously in terms of ontology was Schopenhauer(1788-1860) and that the rejection of his theory has brought about the separation of art from the common concerns of life. He sets out briefly the theory held by Schopenhauer, based on traditional dualistic metaphysics, and involving the distinctions between Being and Becoming, the ideal and the actual, reality and appearance, the permanent and the transitory. Ultimate reality is identified as Will, which objectifies itself in Ideas, "...a superior order of reality, spiritual and immutable, having both temporal and metaphysical priority

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.132.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

over the world of physical objects, which is derivative from them."<sup>1</sup> The mind is the central and crucial agent in lifting humans from their normal bondage to the world of physical particulars, the inferior grade of being, to the superior realm of reality, of Being, as opposed to Becoming. In this transition which comes about through contemplation the person loses himself, and is "...pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge".<sup>2</sup> All this comes about through the vehicle of art:

Art the work of genius,(which) repeats or reproduces the eternal Ideas grasped through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding in all the phenomena of the world; and according to what the material is in which it reproduces, it is sculpture or painting, poetry or music. Its one source is the knowledge of Ideas; its one aim is the communication of this knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

Jenkins' great thrust in his discussion of Schopenhauer and the subsequent description of where aesthetic theory has headed, because of the rejection of the underlying concept of all art being imitation of reality, is to claim for art that it is not just an appendage to life, but unique in its contribution. Consequently he feels that Dewey and the movement influenced by him emphasising art as experience has gone to the other extreme:

The point of departure of this movement is the conviction that expressionistic, psychologistic, and formalistic doctrines have all tended to interpret art in terms that are too restrictive and exclusive, and to relegate it to an only incidental or esoteric role in life.<sup>4</sup>

... the advocates of this position identify appreciation and art in sheerly quantitative terms, as an intensification of any moment of awareness and any course of activity whatsoever. The aesthetic life denies this purported description and explanation of itself, because it asserts that it has a distinctive character and makes a unique contribution.<sup>5</sup>

For Jenkins the problem lying at the roots of all aesthetic schools of thought is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.134

<sup>2</sup>Schopenhauer, A. The World as Will and Idea. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1896; Book Three, Para. 34, p.231.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., para. 36, at p.239.

<sup>4</sup>Jenkins, I., op.cit., P. 141.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.142.

that of "...identifying the aesthetic object..."<sup>1</sup> The above-mentioned paradoxes of the aesthetic life,

are resolved immediately we can specify this object in a manner that satisfies three conditions: it must be real and meaningful in itself, it must be relevant to human concerns, and it must be adequately disclosed only by art and in aesthetic experience.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout his exploration of the meaning and significance of art, Jenkins repeatedly asserts that art, in any form, takes the particularity of that which is familiar, casts new revelation on it, by virtue of in-depth perception and concentrated attention, and invites the audience into that selfsame experience. Removed from the context of day-to-day reality, "normal" experience is given a focus which aims to increase the perception and awareness of it as an aspect of experience. So while the aesthetic object is emphatically and distinctively itself, it also leads into enhanced experience of reality and a deepened sense of universality as a result of that which has been communicated and experienced through the work of art.

Jenkins' deeply held conviction is that art's contribution to life, that is the aesthetic experience offered in its various manifestations, is uniquely rich and significant, that nothing else can take the place of it, although its material is that which is common to all. John Hospers agrees with this. He points out that it is not that one thing as opposed to another is innately aesthetic, but that the aesthetic experience springs from an attitude to life "...without which the use of the term aesthetic to apply to anything distinctive in our experience must quite disappear." <sup>3</sup> This attitude cannot be defined, but is described by Hospers as it generally occurs in common experience:

Ordinarily we perceive a chair simply as something to sit on, a murky sky

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.142.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.143.

<sup>3</sup>Hospers, J. Meaning and Truth in the Arts Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina Press. 1946. P.14.

as a forecast of rain...but the aesthetic attitude can occur only when this practical response to our environment is held in suspension...On these occasions we are perceiving something "not for the sake of action, but for the sake of perceiving"<sup>1</sup>

To quote Jenkins again :

Art transforms these things into aesthetic objects by concentrating its regard on them as being unique and just themselves.<sup>2</sup>

It is this gaze and emphasis which Hoppers calls the aesthetic attitude, which art both springs from, and leads those who are open into: the unique aesthetic experience.

Leland Ryken agrees with Dewey's and Jenkins' thoughts on the role of experience in the approach to any artistic involvement.

...we bring our own fund of experiences and beliefs to a work of art... But the reverse is also true: Our excursions into art give us images and insights that we carry back with us into life. In the experiences of life we are reminded of stories and lines of poetry and songs that codify and express our experiences of the moment.<sup>3</sup>

This is the personal, private aspect of the artistic experience. The other to which Dewey also refers, is the public and potentially bonding characteristic of the artistic experience. This is possible because individuals, more often than not, are a part of "subgroups" in society which share ideals or beliefs and attitudes across the range of matters important to humans, including art. Modern artistic theory refers to such groups as "interpretive communities", each of which will approach any given artistic offering with a set of presuppositions which will effect the way they respond.

The interpretive community with which Ryken is concerned is the Christian world, specifically those christians who accept that the Holy Bible is the source of understanding as to the existence, reality and the nature of God, of the world,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.4.

<sup>2</sup>Jenkins, I., Op.cit.,p.145.

<sup>3</sup>Ryken, L., op.cit., p.262.



of human kind and of meaning and purpose, and therefore in this context, of art and its meaning also. Genesis, the first book in the Bible, begins simply "In the beginning God..."<sup>1</sup> and its opening chapters deal with the issue of creation and creativity, which is crucial to art in all its forms. God is first assumed as the ground and source of all else, and when the Triune Godhead says "Let us make man in our own image,"<sup>2</sup> it is clear that the most outstanding characteristic of God to that point in the narrative is the attribute of creativity. Christian doctrine, biblically founded, sees humans as fundamentally creative, in the essence of what it means to be human. God is also portrayed as expressing the value of that which He has created: five times the narrative states after successive stages of creation, "God saw that it was good."<sup>3</sup> Finally, after the creation of man, "... God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good".<sup>4</sup> The significance of this is as Abraham Kuyper wrote, "As image bearer of God, man possesses the possibility both to create something beautiful, and to delight in it."<sup>5</sup>

In his chapter on the nature and purpose of the arts, Ryken considers this question according to his own presuppositions: "What are the arts designed to do for people and societies?" Dewey would consider the idea of design and therefore of a designer untenable, because his total acceptance of the evolutionary theory as fact precludes any such possibility; Jenkins is certainly not closed to the idea, but leaves it totally uninvestigated; to Ryken the meaning, that is, the nature and purpose of the arts, must be considered in the light of the conscious intent of the Creator.

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<sup>1</sup>Genesis, the book of. The Holy Bible. New King James Version. Nashville, Camden, New York. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1972, 1984. Chapter 1:1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Genesis 1:26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Genesis 1:9, 12, 18, 21, 25.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Genesis 1:31.

<sup>5</sup>Kuyper, Abraham, Calvinism, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1943. p.142.

The centrality of experience, though, is as crucial to Ryken's understanding as to Dewey's and Jenkins. In Ryken's view, it is human experience which is, in almost all expressions of art, the central issue. The exception he makes is non-representational music and some visual art, (a subject to which we must return.) The arts give us a means of coming to grips with reality; "the function of the arts is to heighten our awareness and perception of life by making us vicariously live it."<sup>1</sup> As Northrop Frye, an influential literary critic of this century has said, the role of the artist "is not to tell what happened but what happens: not what did take place, but the kind of thing that always does take place."<sup>2</sup>

Ryken, along with Jenkins, notes the way in which art moves in a degree of unreality, in order to share its insight on experience. This contribution of the imagination is persistently present in art, which suggests at the very least that human beings enjoy this additional dimension of life; but says Ryken:

One of the main functions of the arts is to overcome the deadening effect of the routine, the commonplace, the cliché. The imagination is always searching for freshness of expression. The English Romantic poet Samuel Coleridge Taylor diagnosed the problem very well: The greatest truths "are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the life and efficiency of truth" The imagination, claimed Coleridge, rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission."<sup>3</sup>

An aspect of this heightened awareness is the capacity of art to actually broaden our experience, rather than simply remind us of what is already part of us. The experience of music can come into this understanding of art. Music is itself, motion in sound. Many may be the interpretations of a given example of music, but if it is experienced, if it actually touches and moves one, then one has been enriched by that experience and it becomes a significant event in one's life

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<sup>1</sup>Ryken, L., op.cit., p.31.

<sup>2</sup>Frye, N. The Educated Imagination. Bloomington. Indiana University Press. 1964. p.63.

<sup>3</sup>Ryken, L., op.cit., p.109.\*

experience, even if one is unable to put into words just what that experience has been. What C.S.Lewis said of literature can be taken to cover the experience of music:

We seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves. Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness peculiar to himself... We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts as well as with our own... we demand windows... This so far as I can see, is the specific value or good of literature... it admits us to experiences other than our own.<sup>1</sup>

The excellence, "the unity, coherence and balance"<sup>2</sup> of the arts, draws attention to what an individual work of art is, regardless of content and reference to experience, delighting us or causing us to be full of wonder or awe for the thing in itself. Furthermore, the arts are a vehicle of celebration, a means of expressing at depth that which is the cause of joy or thankfulness of the moment - be it a marriage, the birth of a child, or the return of the forces from battle. The arts refresh, the arts entertain - and at many different levels of experience the arts enrich. A popular song of the eighties and nineties says "Think of a world, a world without music..." As we apply that sentiment to any of the arts, we begin to understand the extent to which our individual worlds, our "personal space" and our world at large are lessened in value without the arts.

Ryken, like Dewey, sees the value of the arts not only for the individual, but for society at large. In primitive tribal life, it is actually difficult to separate the life of the individual from the corporate expression in the arts. In the technological western society of the nineties, there is also a reaching out for a corporate expression through the arts, whether in rock concerts, through "Carols by Candlelight", or "Music in the Park". Ryken suggests that..."The arts are

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis, C.S. An Experiment in Criticism. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1961. Pp.137-139.

<sup>2</sup>Ryken, L. Op.cit., p.37.

perhaps the chief means by which a society focuses attention on its own values."<sup>1</sup>

The arts are a great humanising force in society. The masterpieces of any nation become a social bond. The arts form an indispensable ingredient in our education and because the subject of art is so consistently the human response to life, the arts have a strange power to put people in touch with each other.<sup>2</sup>

Ryken says that "left to itself" a society will show through its artistic taste the values it holds dear, both by the works currently produced and by that of the past to which it gravitates.<sup>3</sup> In an age of mass media and financial vested interests, it would be worth researching how possible it is for certain sections of society to be "left to themselves" and so show their value preference realistically! Nevertheless the point is taken - a society does reveal that which it holds precious by the spontaneous expression of a community through the arts, both in the amount of time, finances and energy invested, and in the issues of human concern which they reflect.

By drawing together the thoughts of Dewey, Jenkins and Ryken on the nature of art, the practising musician is well on the way to satisfying the suggested third criterion for a philosophy of music. Dewey emphasises that the function of art in society is to reinforce group life and its meaning, to enhance experience and to be a means of communication. To Jenkins, art is the means of acquaintance with the particularity of things in our environment, and a unique irreplaceable expression of the human spirit. Ryken describes art as the creative spirit reflecting the creator God. Art is a means of coming to grips with reality, and of expressing the values of a society and an individual.

Researching the nature of art for the purpose of this thesis has revealed to m, a practising musician, just how necessary such an exercise is in developing a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

philosophy of music. The significance to the musician of the stimulus and challenge to thought and understanding cannot be overemphasised. The fulfilling of this criterion increases a sense of the life-connectedness of art , thus reinforcing for the musician a sense of relevance and purpose, primary arguments for a philosophy of music.

Criterion no. 4

A philosophy of music for the practising musician should link music and life experience.

"Experience" is a key concept in the works of Dewey, Jenkins and Ryken. Dewey speaks of experience in two commonly understood ways: on the one hand life is experience; a human being, or an "organism", to use Dewey's term, is sentient, and through the senses is constantly experiencing the surrounding environment. On the other hand the term "experience" is used with different emphasis to describe a particularly impressive set of circumstances causing the exclamation: "That was an experience!"<sup>1</sup>

One could well imagine such a response to the experience of music making offered residents of Tasmania's west coast recently when the Tasmanian Symphony Chamber Players participated in an imaginative scheme to bring art music indelibly into the experience of those who heard music of Mozart, Grieg, Bartok and Warlock played in a concert 200 metres under the ground in a mine at Queenstown. Music making and vital, enriching experience were linked in an event which captured the attention of the people of the west coast and of the whole of Tasmania. For those privileged to be there, "That was an experience!"

John Dewey draws a distinction between the work of art and a work of art. The former is that which is in process as human beings experience aesthetically, as they delight in something, give their attention to it totally and are absorbed in it; a work of art is the result of this process, be it a bowl, a painting, or a symphony. The essence of Dewey's philosophy of art is the linking of art and experience, experience being defined as "heightened vitality".<sup>2</sup> His aim is to see art viewed by all as an integral part of life, not something relegated to art

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<sup>1</sup>Dewey, J. Op.cit. p.36.

<sup>2</sup>Dewey, J. Op.cit., p. 19.

galleries, museums and concert halls. The work of art is to celebrate (clearly where the heightened vitality is relevant) the "...things of ordinary experience..."<sup>1</sup>

The words "heightened vitality" are an apt description of my personal experience in music practice and performance. Of course physical and mental tiredness is a part of a thorough practice session and of a performance, but generally the process of studying and realising a musical work of art is invigorating, exciting and sometimes very moving. In the latter category, I recall an instance when after a little preliminary work I performed for the first time the second movement of Bach's "Italian Concerto." Totally unexpectedly I found myself very deeply affected, and I wept as I played. It felt as if the most inward part of my innermost being was touched. As Dewey says, "That was an experience!" That kind of experience gives life by refreshing and renewing one's mind, emotions and spirit. This is both the nature and reward of the truly aesthetic experience, which is in turn the result of the aesthetic attitude. Hospers declines to define this attitude because, in his view

Like all expressions which refer to experiences or states of feeling, one must have had the experience to know what it is like...one cannot define the aesthetic attitude so as to convey its nature to anyone who has not experienced it.<sup>2</sup>

The aesthetic attitude having been once experienced is indelibly imprinted on one's consciousness, a valuable awareness, causing those who have been so enriched to seek for more of the same. As a practising musician, my calling is to create and use every possible opportunity to lead others into the kind of experience described above.

A typical example of Dewey's understanding of the way in which art and the everyday thing of life are connected is illustrated by his comment on the role of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.11.

<sup>2</sup>Hospers, J. Meaning and Truth in the Arts. Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina Press. 1946. P.7.

nature in art: "Art is not nature, but is nature transformed by entering into new relationships where it evokes a new emotional response."<sup>1</sup> Although Jenkins' concern about Dewey's philosophy of art is that he does not see its unique contribution sufficiently, this is not what Dewey himself expresses. He is against an "esoteric" concept of art being "...so unique that it is without community or connection with the contents of other modes of experience than the aesthetic..."<sup>2</sup> but he certainly claims for art "...a unique quality...of clarifying and concentrating meanings contained in scattered and weakened ways in the material of other experiences."<sup>3</sup> He sets out criteria for a philosophy of art, an exploration with which this thesis has been occupied, with specific emphasis on music:

...a philosophy of art is sterilised unless it makes us aware of the function of art in relation to other modes of experience and unless it indicates why this function is so inadequately realised, and unless it suggests the conditions under which the office would be successfully performed.<sup>4</sup>

The focus of this criterion indicates a concern in line with Dewey's, which explains why his views have been explored to such an extent in this thesis. My own involvement in art as a musician and as a friend and colleague of other practising musicians, has brought to my awareness the necessity for a clearer concept of that with which I am involved, and seeking to involve others. How does the practice and the experience of music, and of art as a whole, fit in to what life is really all about? What is its meaning as a component of human experience? People who are potential music lovers, as yet unaware of the value of music in life, will be attracted to its possibilities by people who are themselves convinced of the value of the experience they are offering, and who are able to offer it in a way that is relevant to the life experience of another at any given point of

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<sup>1</sup>Dewey, J. Op.cit. p.19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.84.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.84.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.12.



entry.

Such a point of entry was given to me, when my teenage daughter invited friends to celebrate her seventeenth birthday. After spending most of the evening listening to christian rock music, she invited me to share some classical piano music. I chose a work which I was confident would be accessible to each person present. Mozart's twelve variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman", (better known as "Twinkle, twinkle little star" in English) are based on a familiar tune, they offer unity and variety, their performance is both aurally and visually interesting, and they are fine music. In the particular circumstance in which I had been invited to perform, this work could well lead my audience into an aesthetic experience. It was very satisfying to sense the growing attention as I played, until there was absolute quiet, and finally, a warm enthusiastic response at the end of the work. From comments shared, I knew that a number of young people had been well initiated into the delights of aesthetic experience. From my perspective, based on my philosophy of life and of music, that experience of sharing music, was immeasurably worthwhile.

I believe that Jenkins would agree. He, like Dewey, sets high store on experience as the basic ingredient of the content of any life as he states in the following words: "Every moment of experience has intrinsic value just as a lived occasion."<sup>1</sup> In his final chapter Jenkins sums up his understanding of the way in which the individual aesthetic experience is absorbed into the fabric of our overall life experience. The experience itself, he suggests, is of such intensity that it seems to be an entity, unrelated to the rest of life; this is the aesthetic moment.

But this moment does not endure; and even while it lasts its quality does not accurately reflect its structure. For there is no "given" that exists independently of our human universe of meaning...Each fresh aesthetic discovery that we make is dependent upon the fabric of experience, and in turn enters into this fabric and contributes to its growth...it stands to reason that the more intensely we live through an experience, the more powerful will be the repercussions of this upon the accumulated body of

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<sup>1</sup>Jenkins, I. Op.cit., p.291.

experience...The entities that are presented to us in art have great clarity and completeness...when we have vividly appreciated a work of art, the part of the world with which it deals is no longer the same for us. In retrospect, and after assimilation has taken place, the extrinsic values of aesthetic experience are in the forefront, and art assumes a role of an agent of life and a contributor to the human enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

Jenkins' burden is to show that the role of art in all its forms is central, rather than peripheral to the living of life; art is one of the three modes (the other two are theory and technology) into which all the dimensions of human activity can be categorised, according to his definition of each, and all overlap. Like Dewey, whose final statement on art as communication revealed his own extraordinarily high ideal as to what art is and what it can achieve, so with Jenkins, although the reasons are different:

Theory and technology together greatly extend our ability to understand things as facts and to control them as values, and so to use them for whatever purposes we see fit. But it still remains for us to choose among these purposes...If our choices are to be mature, they must have illumination and discipline. And art is the only medium through which these can be attained.<sup>2</sup>

By this Jenkins means that because in art we see and experience life as an entity, we can see consequences and weigh up what is wise"... it is through art that we are enabled to apprehend ...values as entities, choose among them with acumen, and dedicate ourselves to their cultivation."<sup>3</sup>

Jenkins seems to suggest that art not only presents life with great vividness, but is the only enabler of the living of it; I would have to question the conclusions he has come to. The criteria by which I judge living life to the full are enduring human relationships, a sense of destiny and of fulfilment , peace of mind , and freedom to live in caring, giving relationship with others. I acknowledge that these criteria relate to my personal philosophy of life, but they are my reasons for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.294.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.304.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.305.

questioning whether the great artists in any sphere have shown that art in itself is the enabler of the living of life claimed by Jenkins. It seems that when our experience of art, or any one dimension of it, is wonderfully enriching personally, it is all too easy to claim for it qualities which, when examined in detail, are not validated.

Ryken chooses to view art and the human beings involved in expressing it from a Biblical perspective. This leads him also to a very high view of art, because the ultimate creator and source of all art, in every manifestation, is God. Ryken's perspective saves him from making art any greater than the strengths and weaknesses of the human beings from whom and through whom it is expressed. Its significance is multi-faceted, its power to influence unrivalled, but its subject matter and manner of treatment, and its morality, do need a measurement outside of themselves, which is given in the Bible by the revelation of the nature and character of God, and His intention in the creation of the world and of human beings.

Ryken says of the arts that they give us the events they are describing plus the meaning; they capture the spirit of life through a certain departure from "the facts". In using the imagination, they capture truth.

The artistic imagination, too organises life for us....artists serve the function of remembering for the human race. Works of art are the collective memories of what human experience is like, arranged into patterns of the imagination."<sup>1</sup>

He agrees with Jenkins and certainly does not disagree with Dewey's connecting of art and experience when he states:

The heightened awareness that we experience as we read stories and poems or listen to music or look at visual art is something that we can in turn, carry with us into real life. The connections between life and art are vital. Art aims to help us cope with life by temporarily removing us from it and then sending us back to it with renewed understanding and zest.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ryken, L. Op.cit. p.35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.32.

Above all, the significance of the arts for Ryken is that they are a reflection in humanity of the fact, revealed in the Holy Bible, attested to in the historical experience of believers, and by the extraordinary glory of nature, that we are artists because we are made in the image of God. He is the artist, and has shared that characteristic uniquely with humans, out of all the created beings.

The fourth criterion for a philosophy of music stresses a point which is an emphasis throughout this thesis. The search for meaning in music is inextricably interwoven with the issues of life itself, and life consists of experience. Experience is ongoing, but through art people can focus on the particularity of any and every aspect of life and know heightened awareness and refreshment of being. The practising musician has the potential and possibility to personally grow in aesthetic awareness and to creatively lead others into the same experience. A philosophy of music for the practising musician needs to incorporate that integral link between music and life experience.

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the area of meaning as it pertains to both life and music, proposing first the concept that a philosophy of music is of crucial importance to the music practitioner, and second that this cannot be separated from the necessity of a philosophy of life: music like all the arts is a part of life as a whole and the wellsprings for creativity concern the whole person and the whole of life.

I stated in the introduction that this thesis was a part of my personal quest for understanding of meaning in music. Its title indicates that there was no expectation that this paper would do more than begin such a search. Meaning is a word often used and a concept commonly discussed by thinking people in any sphere of life. Philosophers, theologians and scientists bring to it the particular emphasis of their respective disciplines. I have chosen to draw mainly from the philosophical approach, since from earliest times, philosophers have concerned themselves with the mysteries of music. In this last decade of the Twentieth Century meaning in music is as open to research as ever. Hence while the beginnings have informed me, they have also raised issues yet to be explored.

One such issue involves the communication of meaning in music, an issue which is so debated in the field of literature that it has received a name, "post-structuralism". Post-structuralists hold the view that there is no definitive meaning in literature. A writer is not fully aware of the meaning he creates in a text because connotative meaning is infinite. Each reader creates his own meaning from the text, but this is not communicable, and in any case meaning is in a constant state of change. This aspect of meaning in music was touched upon in the criterion concerning a definition of art, but could conceivably be a topic on its own.

Susanne Langer made the point in her research Philosophy in a New Key, that expression of meaning through symbol is an aspect of the sciences which is

bringing new ways of thinking about meaning into the arts. Here is another area of research for the practising musician.

John Hospers speaks of the effects of art as:

...a peculiar relief and release, a freedom from inner turbulence...in the very act of concentrating our energies upon an aesthetic object, our spiritual state is improved; there is a release from tension and a kind of inner clarification that was not present before. The effect includes a heightening of our sensibilities, a refining of our capacities for perceptual and emotional discrimination, and a capacity to respond more sensitively to the world around us." <sup>1</sup>

Again there is the reiteration that music as one expression of art cannot be separated from life experience; the stuff of life is the subject matter of art, and the role of art is to cause us to see life through new eyes. The musician, by coming to an understanding of the meaning of life and the place of music in the overall scheme of things can share with others from a position of secure conviction, rather than defensively, being unsure. People come to such a place of conviction from vastly differing philosophical positions, as the collection The Meaning of Life revealed, and what is convincing to one is not convincing to another. The importance of searching for truth in response to the questions human beings are privileged to be able to ask is underlined by both the functions of philosophy and the arts, and these are combined in this thesis in order to move towards forming criteria for a philosophy of music for the practicing musician.

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<sup>1</sup>Edwards, P.(Ed.) The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. New York. Macmillan Company and the Free Press. 1967. Volume One, P.51. John Hospers. "Problems of Aesthetics".

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